

PANA.
JAPAN



MISS BAMBOO AT HER STUDIES

STUDENT LIFE IN NIPPON

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PRICE THREE CENTS



WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
36 BROMFIELD STREET, BOSTON, MASS.



Student Life in Nippon



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T is a significant fact that when Rev. James Ballagh of Yokohama organized the first Christian Church in modern Japan, nine of the eleven members were students. Probably no Christian mission of ancient or modern times has gained such a standing with the student classes as have the missions in Japan. It is therefore of commanding interest to get a glimpse of modern student life in Japan.

It would hardly be suspected that the present school life of Japan has any relation with that of earlier days, so striking is the contrast, and yet at no time and in no country is the present more thoroughly rooted in the past.

**The Old
Student Life**

In the olden days, not so long ago measured by the almanac, but ages ago measured by achievement, the old school teacher went from place to place, a veritable pedagogue, teaching the sons of the two-sworded knight. Learning was for knights and for gentlemen. Some disabled knight would turn to teaching as a vocation, both on account of his scorn for menial pursuits, and because this work would bring him in contact with men of his class. The feudal lords, finding it convenient or fashionable to have schools for their retainers, became patrons of the pedagogues who settled down in homes provided by their lord. If the teacher was a real teacher by nature and training his fame would spread to more distant parts. Mere boys were brought and placed in care of the famous teacher. To the students this man became not only instructor, but parent, friend, guide, patron, and inspiration. The boys were taught to be neat and orderly, to care for their own rooms and clothes, to endure hardship without complaint, to champion the cause of the weak, to be true to their feudal lord, to obey their superior in everything.

The exercises or studies of the school consisted of reading the Chinese classics, committing to memory important parts, writing letters, composing



BOYS LEARNING EMBROIDERY.

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Chinese poems, fencing, wrestling, horsemanship, archery, and many manly sports. Long excursions were taken on foot to noted places, even small boys joining unflinchingly in the tramp. Boys were sent on imaginary errands through lonely woods and cemeteries to test their courage, until they knew no fear. This practise remains in some places to this day.

As education of this sort was for the knights and the gentry, the merchants and artisans had schools of their own for apprentices, after the shops had closed at night. Here the boys were instructed in business correspondence, bookkeeping, accounts, and a certain amount of general reading and writing. It was not necessary for these to know much about the classics.

As for the girls, they of the common people were not instructed in letters at all, unless they were needed to help manage the business of the store or shop. The daughters of knights and nobles received appropriate instruction in their own homes, either from some one of the numerous members or from a tutor employed who visited the house for the purpose. Even now much instruction to children of the higher classes is given in this way. It speaks well for the women of Nippon that, notwithstanding the disabilities under which they studied, some of the best romances of the land were written by them.

When the great Restoration wave struck Japan in the sixties of the past century many changes were made. Old class distinctions were abolished, and three grades of society instituted,—the nobility, the gentry, and the common people. Even the despised *Eta* class, outcasts, were made a part of the common people. Hitherto the *Eta* were obliged to live apart, and to engage in very menial pursuits, such as scavengers, tanners, butchers. Now freedom of residence and of occupation is open to them, although of course they live together largely from force of habit and custom.

The larger part of the students of the Imperial University are from the common people, and three-fourths of the Representatives in the Diet are from this same class. All the children except those of the nobility attend the public schools.

The whole plan and scope of student life has been changed, as may be seen by reading the great rescript of the present Emperor on the subject of education. A part of it runs: "It is intended that henceforth education shall be so diffused that there may not be a village with an ignorant family nor a family with an ignorant member." This noble ambition sounded the death knell to class distinctions, for education is a great leveler, leveling up instead of down. The logical result of this proclamation led to the educa-

tional freedom of women. Of course these influences and many more, especially the presence of missionaries, have had a great effect on student life all over the Empire.

The present system consists of kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools, higher schools, and the universities, together with numerous technical institutions and schools for special studies. The latest statistics show that the number of elementary schools is 27,154, with an attendance of 5,135,487, a percentage of 91.75. There are 57 normal schools, with 19,194 pupils; 859 industrial and technical schools, with 57,855 pupils; 258 middle schools, with 95,027 pupils; 80 higher schools for girls, with 21,523 pupils; two Imperial Universities, 4,046 students; 50 public and private special schools, with 16,690 pupils; and eight government teachers' training institutes, with 319 pupils.

**The New
School Life**

Now little Miss Bamboo and her brother, Corageous, start off to the public school when six years of age. At first Grandpa or some trusted servant of the household leads them. They carry a package or satchel in which are a few books, an ink stone, a *stick* of ink, a numeral frame, a pen brush to *paint* their lessons, and a writing book. This last is

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a curiosity; made originally of tough white paper, it is written on till every part of the page is black. Then it is hung out of the window or on the veranda to dry. In drying the ink becomes slightly different in color from what it was when fresh. Thus it is written over again and again. What infinite patience is required to write or paint the Chinese characters that make up the scholarly language of Japan! The very holding of the brush is a fine art, and then the painting! It is really wonderful. This breeds and trains a nation of artists.

In the old school the students studied aloud. The instruction was largely individual and each student had his appropriate lesson, and each would shout out the characters in a high sing-song key. A thoroughly good school in a brown study could be heard half a mile. Now silent study is largely insisted upon.

In addition to the things mentioned our little friends carry a pair of straw sandals in their package. On their feet they wear large wooden clogs, very high ones in wet weather. Arriving at the school entrance they find on either side long rows of boxes one above the other, like post-office boxes only larger. Into these the wooden shoes are placed and the straw sandals are worn in the school. On entering the little folks take their seats and at

a signal all rise and solemnly bow to the teacher. Then the work of the day begins. Great attention is paid to physical training with wands, dumb-bells, rings, bean bags, poles, stilts, bucking blocks, and other appliances. Playgrounds are attached to all schools and much is made of out-door games and sports. The girls are taught sewing, drawing; and floral arrangement, for no girl is really educated till fully taught this fine art, and also how to serve tea and to receive guests properly. The higher schools teach *jiu jitsu* to the boys.

The study of the Chinese characters both from the page and by writing takes so much time that now the number required is being steadily reduced, and some modern language, usually English, taught instead. In the public schools no religious instruction is given. Ethical teaching, including duties to rulers, to parents, to fellowmen, is insisted upon, but many of the best educators are doubting whether mere formal ethics will so affect the heart as to lead to the best life. Baron Maejima says: "I firmly believe that we must have religion as the basis of our national and personal welfare. No matter how large an army or navy we may have, unless we have righteousness at the foundation of our national existence we shall fall far short of the highest success. I do not hesitate to say that we must rely upon religion

for our highest welfare. And when I look about me to see what religion we may best rely upon, I am convinced that the religion of Christ is the one most full of strength and promise for the nation and the individual."

The private schools after a long struggle have been permitted to teach religion without losing their standing in the Department of Education. The schools for girls have been particularly influential in encouraging the progressive element to give education to all the people, women as well as men.

Little Miss Bamboo has now turned her knowledge of sewing to good account, for her brother, Corageous, has grown, too, and has joined the brave army in Manchuria, and she and her companions are very busy at work making clothes for the soldiers. We hope that Miss Bamboo has become a Christian by this time, and that with every stitch she puts in a prayer for her dear brother at the front.

**Boarding
Schools**

What has been said about the school life of Miss Bamboo and her brother refers to her in the public primary school. Perhaps her father and mother have been to some of the cities and have seen the large boarding schools and have resolved to let her take an advanced course.



A GROUP OF CHARMING SCHOOLGIRLS.

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So one day a jinrikisha drives up to the door filled with thick bundles. There are the great quilts two or three inches thick that serve for bed or bed cover. One is made with sleeves, broad and spacious like wings, and this is worn like a *kimono*, a very funny-looking nightdress. Then there are willow boxes containing all the nice clothing and a wooden pillow. There is a little table, some books, and perhaps one or two pictures on rolls for room ornament. The American school girl's room looks like a combination photograph gallery and Buddhist funeral to the modest little Japanese student. Miss Bamboo sits on the soles of her feet for a chair, but it does not hurt, as she has been taught to do so all her life. Her room is all shut up one minute and the next she lets in all out-doors by sliding back the paper doors, and on the outside of the veranda she slides back the thin wooden storm doors. So she lives a great deal of the time practically out of doors and is taught to love all beautiful things. Her brother is taught the same thing in his school, which must always be separate from the girls' schools except in the primary grades.

Shall we not love these young folks, who are so patient, courteous and brave?